

The Shepherds
Luke 2

ETS: The angels proclaimed Good News to the Shepherds

ESS: Christmas is about God's Gift of Good News

OSS: Unwrap the gift of Good News

PQ: Have you unwrapped the gift of Good News?

UW: Good

WE

What makes Christmas a "Good" Christmas for you?

- Get the gift you wanted?
- Christmas with **family** members-(That may not be good)
- Christmas dinner?
- Christmas Carols?

Have you ever had a *terrible* Christmas?

- Fight broke out between family members?
- Someone refused to come over?
- Didn't get the gift you wanted?
- Got sick from overeating?
- Were sick during Christmas?
- First Christmas without a loved one?

Desire: We all want a “good” Christmas!

- We want the words of that song to be true: “It’s the most wonderful time of the year...It’s the hap, happiest season of all.”

Desire: We all want a “good” Christmas!

Finish this phrase: “If is good enough for you, then it is _____ enough for me”

- What is that saying? *If something meets your criteria of excellence, morality, standards, then it will meet mine.*

For something to be called “Good” that means that there has to be **alternative** that is *not-so-good*.

- We say things like “A good man is hard to find”
 - Why? Because there are a lot of men whom don’t seem to fit or be excellent.
- Here’s a phrase we use: “The good, bad and the ugly”
 - When we **compare** people or things there are some things or people who are **excellent, well-qualified, a fit**-they are the “good”
 - Others are not excellent, NOT **qualified** and NOT a **fit**-they are the “Bad”
 - Still others are in a category that **defies** “good” or “bad”-they are just “ugly!”

For something to be called “Good” that means that there has to be **alternative** that is *not-so-good*.

- If you say “We had a good Christmas this year” then apparently there were **other years** when you didn’t have such a good time!
 - Maybe last year’s Christmas wasn’t so good it was like the **Griswald’s Christmas**
- If you say “The Christmas **dinner** was good this year” then apparently there were other years when you had “Fruitcake delight” for **desert** and **dried** ham.
- If you say “We had a good Christmas this year” then apparently there were other Christmas’ when you **didn’t have** your **family** together or you **didn’t receive** the **gift** you wanted.

WE

Based on what YOU would like to see, do you believe we are living in **Good Times**?

- Is **COVID-19** a good thing?
- Are the **Lockdowns** resulting in businesses closing a good thing?
- Is it a good thing that we are all wearing **masks**?
- Is it a good thing that we can’t **hug** each other?
- Is the **drug** problem a “good” thing?

- Is war a good thing?

Are those “good” things?

- If not, why not?
 - Because something tells us that it is **not “good”**...
 - People are **living in poverty** is **not “good”**...
 - People are addicted to drugs is **not “good”**...
 - People are dying in wars is **not “good”**...
 - Families being destroyed is **not “good”**...

These things are NOT GOOD because they lead to **suffering, pain and death!**

- We don't think it is good that anyone is suffering

Do you think humanity wants “good” things?

- Do you think people want to enjoy a “good” life?
- Do you think people want to have “good” kids?
- Do you think people want to have “good” parents?

What makes something “good”?

- What makes your life a “Good” life?
- What makes a parents a “Good” parent?

- What makes a child a “good” child?
- What makes a job a “good” job?

GOD

Turn to **Luke 2**

Not much Good News for a group of people called **Shepherds**

- **Shepherds** were **not highly regarded** people in that day and age.
 - They were the some of the **lowliest** people.

Years after Joseph’s exile to Egypt and rise to viceroy of the king of Egypt, when his brothers came to him in exile, Joseph presented them to Pharaoh, the king of Egypt.

- The question that most interested the king was: **“What is your occupation?” “We are shepherds,”** they replied to Pharaoh, **“like our fathers before us (Genesis 47:3).”**
 - Shepherding was not a respected occupation in Egypt, and Pharaoh relegated Joseph’s family to the **far-off land** of **Goshen**.

The Jews at the time of Jesus’ birth were heavily influence by the Greek and Roman cultures.

- A famous Greek philosopher whose ideas shaped that culture was **Aristotle**.

Here is what Aristotle said about shepherds: “the laziest are shepherds, who lead an idle life, and get their subsistence without trouble from tame animals; their flocks wandering from place to place in search of pasture, they are compelled to follow them, cultivating a sort of living farm.”

- Aristotle declared that shepherding is easy because of the animals involved.

The **rabbis** had banned pasturing sheep and goats in Israel, except on desert plains.

The **Mishnah**, which are Jewish oral laws referred to shepherds as “incompetent” and “another says no one should ever feel obligated to rescue a shepherd who has fallen into a pit.”¹

Jeremias documents the fact that shepherds were deprived of all civil rights. They could not fulfill judicial offices or be admitted in court as witnesses.

- He wrote, “To buy wool, milk or a kid from a shepherd was forbidden on the assumption that it would be stolen property.”
 - In Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus, Jeremias notes: “The rabbis ask with amazement how,

in view of the despicable nature of shepherds, one can explain why God was called ‘my shepherd’ in Psalm 23:1.”ⁱⁱ

- **Shepherds** lived their days with **sheep!**
 - The only Good News for a shepherd was when...
 - He/she found **water** for the sheep
 - All the **sheep** were **accounted** for at the end of the day

In addition, to being looked down upon by society, shepherds faced a lot of **bad news**

- Bad News of **droughts**
- Bad News of **thieves**
- Bad News of **animals** of **prey**
- Bad News of **long, hot** days and **cold, bone-chilling nights** in the fields

In the midst of a **typical night** for **shepherds** the Christmas story begins: **Luke 2:8–10** (CSB) “**In the same region, shepherds were staying out in the fields and keeping watch at night over their flock. 9 Then an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.**

Facing down a **lion** or a **bear** was **Bad News**, but when you are looking at “**an angel of the Lord**”-that is terrifying!

- Not only are they face-to-face with **an angel of the Lord**, but “**the glory of the Lord shone around them**”!

The Shepherds have the typical response: “**They were terrified**”

- In fact, almost every time an angel appears to someone in the Scriptures they are “**terrified**”
 - If you ever see an angel, you’ll be **terrified**!
 - That is why I am **skeptical** of people who say they’ve **seen angels** and **don’t mention** being **terrified** about the whole incident!

Because humans are always “**terrified**” when they see an angel, the angel gives the typical angel greeting “**Don’t be afraid**”!

- Whenever the angels have a **briefing** before coming to earth, I am sure that is the **first item** in the “*How to greet human’s handbook.*”
 - **Item 1:** When you first appear to a human always say “**Don’t be afraid**” b/c you are going to scare them to death!

As they are no doubt standing there **paralyzed** in **fear**, the angel says “**Don’t be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.**”

- What kind of news is the angel proclaiming?
“**Good News**”
 - **Note:** It is always much **better** when an angel has “**Good News**” to proclaim **rather** than **bad news!**

What does He mean by “**Good News**”?

- He means that **compared** to all the other news- this is **superior** news, **excellent** news, the **right** news, etc.

Result of this Good News: “**Good News of Great joy**”

- To put in into today’s terms: “**Good News of MEGA joy**”
 - *Significantly Good News*
 - *Important Good News*

That night on the **hillside** an angel told the **Shepherd** that he had a gift for them!

God’s Gift is Good News

The Gift was wrapped in “Good News”

- This news was “**good**” b/c it was the “**right fit**” for humanity
- This news was “**good**” b/c it was **superior** to all other news
- This news was “**good**” b/c it was **better** than any other news out there!
- This news was “**good**” b/c it was **from God!**
 - **If** an **angel** from God appears to you and tells you he has “**Good News**” then it has got to be **better** than any **other** news!

However, if there was a group of people who thought they **didn’t deserved** “**Good News**” it would have been **Shepherds!**

- If there was a group of people who would have felt **unworthy** to have an angel of God speak to them it would be the shepherds
 - An angel appearing to a **priest** like **Zechariah** was one thing, but to a group of **shepherds-unthinkable!**

When you looked under the **Christmas tree** I am sure there were boxes which were *gift wrapped*.

- Some was **wrapped** really nice

- I hate really nicely wrapped gifts b/c I'm afraid I'll make someone mad if I tear up the paper
 - Why do people buy expensive wrapping paper?
 - Why do some people gingerly open their gifts so they can keep the wrapping paper?
 - “Oh, I saw this paper last year. It's a little yellow and crinkled and aged, but at least we saved a dollar!”

It is nice to see a bunch of boxed sitting wrapped under the tree.

- Have you ever had the experience of getting a box out to hand out, but there is not tag on it?
 - If it was a BIG box with no tag, it was **always mine!**
 - The bigger and heavier the box the better!
 - If it was **small and light** you can give it my sister!

How do you know which box is for whom? **The Tag!**

- The **Tag** tells who the present is for!

Why do the angels appear to shepherds?

- Why not appear to the **religious leaders**?
 - Why not show up that **temple** 5 miles up the road?

*If anyone **deserved** to get Good News it was the **religious leaders**!*

- They are the ones who wore the robes, sang the **chants**, did the **big prayers** in the temple **courtyard**; pronounced **judgment** on the sinners, made **new traditions**, etc.
 - They are the ones who know the **Torah**, the **Prophets**, the **Writings**, the **Talmud**, etc.

Why do the angels appear to shepherds?

- They are the **low-life's**
- They are the **unclean**
- They are the ones **without a future**

The angel hands them a gift described as “**Good News**” and he shows them the

God's Gift is For ALL people

Luke 2:10 “**But the angel said to them, “Don't be afraid, for look, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for *all the people*:**

This **gift** is for *every kind* of person: rich, poor, educated, non-educated, able-bodied, disabled, straight, gay, single, married, liar, the honest, etc.

- This **gift** is for the **outcasts of society**, the “**unclean**”, etc.

He **didn't say** “I bring you Good news of great joy which will be for **some people**.”

He **didn't say** “I bring you Good news of great joy which will be for the **Jewish people**.”

He **didn't say** “I bring you Good news of great joy which will be for **YOUR people**.”

The **tag** says that this Good News is “for **ALL the people**”

God's Good News is for you!

- Even if you've **not** been to **church** for years, God's Good News is for you!
- Even if you've **never read** a Bible, God's Good News is for you!
- Even if you've “**Got a reputation**”, God's Good News is for you!
- Even if you are a **good person**, God's Good News is for you!

What makes a gift good?

- We call it good when we believe it is the **right gift** for our **need**!
- We call it good when it satisfies a **desire**

Moose Tracks is a Good gift because it satisfies my sweat tooth!

- That engagement ring is a good gift b/c it satisfies the desire to be asked for a hand in marriage.

What makes a gift good? *When it has value!*

- If it **satisfies** a **need**, it has value to us
- If it **satisfies** a **desire**, it has value to us

God's Gift Has Value

What is the *VALUE* of the gift the angel is proclaiming?

Luke 2:11 “Today in the city of David a Savior was born for you, who is the Messiah, the Lord.”

What is a Savior?

- **Savior: A deliverer, a rescuer, redeemer**

If you **stuck** in a **snow storm** and someone digs you out and **saves** your life, that person becomes a

“**Savior**” to you!

What **greater value** can you have than that of being **rescued** from something?

- What **greater value** can you have than that of being **delivered** from something?

The reason this gift is “**Good News**” is b/c it is the gift of a **rescuer, deliverer, redeemer: a Savior!**

- This **rescuer, deliverer, redeemer, Savior** is “**For all people**”

The angel describes this Savior as “**Messiah**”-lit. the “**Anointed One**”

- He is the one the Jews have been waiting for to **deliver** them.

The angel describes this Savior as “**the Lord**” – lit. the **owner, ruler, master**.

This is not an **ordinary baby!**

- A baby who is “**Savior**”
- A baby who “**the Messiah**”
- A baby who is “**the Lord**”
- A baby who is “**for all people**”

A baby who is **THE GOOD NEWS** mankind has been waiting for!

God's Gift is Available

Luke 2:12 “This will be the sign for you: You will find a baby wrapped tightly in cloth and lying in a manger.”

- These “low life’s”, these “people who can’t be trusted” were told where this baby was **located!**
 - Detailed: **baby**

There could be many babies in town, but the angel narrows it down....

- Detail: **wrapped tightly in cloth**

Not too uncommon for a baby, but the angel narrow it down....

- Detail: **lying in a manger.**

That is a **DISTINCTION!**

- Newborns are going to be homes, but this one is in a barn!
 - That detail significantly narrowed the search!!

God's gift is NOT hidden!

- We have the Word of God
- We have the testimony of History

God is NOT trying to keep anyone out of heaven!

- God is the “rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”
- God says “Seek and you shall find”

When you got your gifts on Christmas Day, did you ever do an “on-the-spot-assessment”?

- In other words, how did your gift compare to your sister’s or your brother’s?
 - Did you get the **most** gifts?
 - Did you get the **biggest** gifts?
 - Did you get the **coolest** gifts?
 - Did you get the **most expensive** gifts?

How many have done the **gift review**? I have!

God’s Gift Brings Him Glory

The angelic review of God’s gift is that this gift brings God glory!

Luke 2:13–14 (CSB) “Suddenly there was a multitude of the heavenly host with the angel, praising God and saying: 14 Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace on earth to people he favors!”

- Why did the angels say “**Glory to God in the highest heaven**”?
 - Because this **Good News** came from God!
- Why was this such Good News?
 - Because this **Good News** could bring “**peace**” upon people

I wonder why the **angel first appeared** to the **Shepherds** rather than the **religious leaders**?

- I believe it was because they would accept that this was Good News
 - They wouldn’t try to **complicate** the Good News
 - They wouldn’t **debate** whether they had really seen angels
 - They wouldn’t **question** why God would choose Bethlehem to be the birthplace

YOU

Christmas is a celebration of God’s Good News!

Unfortunately, we have tried to complicate the Good News

- Complicated it with our traditions
- Complicated it with our rules
- Complicated it with our regulations

We have tried to limit the people to whom the News is Good!

- If you straighten up then you can receive the Good News

We have made the Good News into Bad News for many people

- The Good News is only for Good people
- The Good News is only for the right kind of people
- The Good News is for those who keep the rules

We have made the Good News inaccessible, complicated, and undesirable.

The Good News is not complicated

- Good News: God sent us a Savior
- Good News: The Savior is Christ the Lord
- Good News: Christ can save us from our sin
- Good News: Anyone who calls upon Christ to save them is delivered from the power and eternal consequences of sin
- Good News: Those who call upon Christ will be with God in peace for eternity
- Good News: Your soul can be saved

- Good News: You can live with hope, meaning and purpose
- Good News: You can have a relationship with the God of the universe!

THE GOOD NEWS IS FOR EVERYONE!

Have you taken God's gift of Good News? A Savior

- Have you experienced Christ's deliverance from your sin?

Christmas is about God's Good News!

ⁱ <https://www.epm.org/resources/2008/Mar/11/shepherds-status/>

ⁱⁱ Ibid.